

Subcommittee Chairman Adam Smith
Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities
Subcommittee
Hearing re: Strategic Communications and Counter Ideological
Support for Terrorism

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"Our fight against al-Qaeda and their message of violent, totalitarian subjugation has many different pieces to it, but central to them all is an ideological struggle – a war of ideas. We cannot just fight al-Qaeda and their current supporters. We must strategically communicate a better message in a better way to stop the spread of extremism and deny al-Qaeda new supporters.

"Strategic communications were a central component of our struggle against communism during the Cold War. In our current battle of ideas, they should remain front-and-center as we work to roll back al-Qaeda's spread among disaffected populations. Various organizations within our government are working in some way to counter these messages, but my sense is that we lack a coordinated, comprehensive, adequately resourced strategy to confront al-Qaeda's ideology through a strategic message campaign.

"Al-Qaeda as an organization are very adept communicators. They aggressively seek opportunities through a variety of new and traditional media to promulgate their arguments and radicalize and recruit local populations. Through clever use of the Internet and a steady trickle of video messages distributed to and through the media, al-Qaeda drives its central messages and takes us on in the marketplace of ideas.

"The subcommittee plans to focus on four key areas today:

- 1). How is the U.S. strategic communications effort to counter terrorist messages organized and coordinated?
- 2). What is the current state of strategic planning for these inter-agency efforts?
- 3). What are the metrics and feedback mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of these efforts?
- 4). What are the plans for the next 5 years?

"I want to thank our witnesses for taking time to discuss a central issue in our current struggle against al-Qaeda."